

American Opinion Summary

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U-2 AGAIN

"Some evidence of manufactured crisis" is seen by observers in the September 4 Soviet charge that a "U-2" aircraft violated Soviet airspace August 30 (New York Times, Scripps-Howard press, Sen. Aiken, R-Vt.).

"The vehemence and timing of the Russian protest appears keyed to distract world attention from a minor Russian backdown in Berlin and from the USSR's growing involvement in military aid to Cuba," the Times and others agree (e.g., Sens. Cannon, D-Mev., Keating, R-NY, N.Y. Herald Tribune, David Lawrence). "With the UN meeting in two weeks," some point out, "the Russians will use "anything they can find for propaganda" against the U.S. and the global system of Western military alliances (Sen. Aiken, Wall St. Journal, Martin Berok in Herald Tribune).

The U.S. handling of the charge evokes a mixed reaction. Praise for the "equable, good-tempered and conciliatory answer to the Soviet complaint" comes from the Washington Post, Sens. Stennis, D-Miss., and Fulbright, D-Ark. "This country made a mistake when it allowed a U-2 mission to intrude on Soviet airspace and it was good to have the error promptly admitted," in the Post's opinion (somewhat similarly, Chalmers Roberts).

But the Hearst press is sharply disapproving. "Instead of keeping quiet--or at the most saying 'Who, us? '--the Administration has by its acknowledgment and apology repeated the mistakes of the Eisenhower Administration in the first U-2 incident, furnishing the Soviet Union with a ready-made propaganda weapon," Hearst's New York Journal-American protests. "This doesn't inspire the confidence of the American people in a strong and firm administration," it maintains.

The Baltimore Sun suggests that in the light of the "miserable fumbling" of the first U-2 incident, "we need not be surprised to encounter widespread skepticism" about our current explanation.

The U.S. "should resume the U-2 spy flights," Sen. Goldwater (R-Ariz.) contends. "They spy on us; let's spy on them." Agreeing, the Journal-American emphasizes: "This is not a polite game of cricket. Both sides employ every means of espionage available." If the objective is important enough, says the Washington Star, "the risk must be taken. No one should get unduly excited."

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